



California State Parks

Quick Facts



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Interpretation and Education

The role of California State Parks as a partner in education cannot be underestimated. Education of visitors to parks is termed 'interpretation,' meaning the interpretation of the natural and cultural resources of a park. Interpretation is part education, part inspiration, part entertainment. It is a sharing of knowledge, enthusiasm, appreciation and wonder.

- Within the many units of the State Park System you can find a wide variety of interpretive programs:
 - Audio/visual programs
 - Campfire and amphitheater programs
 - Demonstrations and participatory activities
 - Dramatic presentations
 - Environmental Living Programs
 - Environmental Studies Programs
 - Festivals and fairs
 - Guided walks and tours
 - Hands-on and Discovery areas
 - Junior Engineer/Lifeguard/Naturalist/Ranger Programs
 - Litter Getter/Adopt-a-Beach program
 - Live domestic animals
 - Living History/Re-enactment Programs
 - Museums
 - Observatories
 - Puppet shows
 - Recycling Programs
 - School Programs
 - Self guided tours and nature trails
- In 2002/03, over 1.5 million visitors enjoyed guided hikes, tours, talks and demonstrations; 109,000 attended campfire programs; 5 million visited museums and visitor centers in the parks; and 3.3 million went on self guided walks or tours.
- Young visitors can participate in programs designed specifically for them, such as Junior Rangers and Junior Lifeguards.
- More and more students live in urban areas where distance or economic and social barriers prevent them from visiting State Parks. In response to these situations, California State Parks has initiated the Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) program.
 - Using the Digital California Project network (a high speed network connecting California's public schools), PORTS is able to deliver live presentations to classrooms from parks throughout the state.
 - PORTS provides fully developed units of study that furnish support, structure, preparation and follow-up for the live presentations.
 - Students study science, history, language arts and other academic content standards while interacting with California State Park staff on the live video feed.



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- Interpretive programs in California State Parks help teachers meet the core academic content standards adopted by the California Board of Education. State Park employees have been directed to align all school group interpretive programs with appropriate California Academic Content Standards. Field trips to the natural and cultural areas administered by California State Parks offer students opportunities to relate the science and history/social science components taught in the classrooms to real examples they can see, touch and understand.
- Each year approximately 600,000 school children attend formal interpretive programs in state parks, underscoring the importance of parks as a component of the California Department of Education's school curriculum standards. Field trip statistics (2002/03 fiscal year):
 - Natural History and Cultural Heritage field trips - 569,000 students
 - Environmental Studies and Environmental Living Programs – 21,000 students
- California State Park staff also visit schools, bringing the park to the classroom. Over 43,000 students benefited from this type of program in the 2002/03 fiscal year.
- Not all interpretive programs in state parks are presented by paid employees. Nearly 11,000 volunteers contributed over 900,000 hours to the department in 2003. Volunteers staff visitor centers, maintain trails, serve as camp hosts, give interpretive programs, present special events and do much, much more to share their love of the parks with the visiting public.